

Winter 2001

The club's been active since the last newsletter with a good turn out for the pre-Christmas nibbles. Whilst the quiz proved to be quite a test for most of those who took part, Ted and Dave Gair took their respective places in the hot seat of "Who wants to be a mountaineer?". Congratulations to Dave G who ascended the dizzy heights of Everest's summit with all lifelines used!

Members out and about include the gathering who accompanied Trowie on his Xmas Pud walk; Nigel and Michelle travelled to Meribel for the skiing; Richard and Annette have been cragging and winter gully climbing with Bob Tillson and Lee Scott in the Lakes; Elvyn provided the venue for an impromptu New Year slide show; Ewan's been seen in B&Q and Pete Lee is 50!!

This year's meets have been popular so far at both Rhydd Ddu and Nant Gwynant. The exciting programme of meets can fill your social diary with at least a meet per month, together with the promise of a new venue for this year's President's. For further details, read on.

Efforts still continue behind the scenes in search of a suitable club hut venue, and Eddie the Treasurer will always be willing to accept donations towards the hut fund. Eddie's also on your tails if you've not paid your subs, so be warned find him before he finds you! Apparently Brian Cooper has already **turned up** in person to pay his subs! Alison.

Chairman's Report

We were just quorate at the AGM (after a quick ring round on the mobiles to drum up a few more attendees). This went pretty smoothly and the only potential controversy, the venue for this year's President's Meet, did not arise. We'll be going to the Snowdon Ranger YH on 5th-7th October 2001.

I would like to thank everyone who has made it another good year for the club. To those of you who have been active and keeping the club's name prominent, those of you who have introduced new members and then taken them out on the hill and crag, those who have worked tirelessly at club meets and events, and invited us to meet with other clubs.

If you are not a post-holder or a genius at organisation, then you can still help considerably by joining up as early as possible in the New Year (£10), by booking early for meets and by paying promptly! Also, if you say you are definitely going on a meet but then change your mind, it's only polite to let the organiser know! Whilst the vast majority of members do, some don't and this can double the hassle for the organiser!

I'd like to wish you all a great year out on the hill. As I write this we are being promised a white January, so sharpen up those axes and crampons!

Dave Gair.

Membership Fees

Membership fees are now due - £10 again – and should be paid as soon as possible, Eddie.

Ay up...Snow!!

A week in Ffestiniog may not sound appealing to some, but when all those grey slate quarries are covered in the white stuff and it's Christmas....magic. Probably the best snow conditions for years. And we had it all to ourselves - hardly anyone about.

We bagged Cnicht, Andrea's first real mountain in Wales, walked around frozen lakes and through woods covered in snow above Maentwrog, travelled first class on the steam railway down to Porthmadog, trekked over to Llyn Crafnant from Capel, and almost bagged Mynydd Mawr, during the course of the week. After good ale and good food at The Grapes, it was feet up in front of the log fire back at the cottage. Bliss.

Next year we're hoping to go up to Scotland for the 10 days....anyone interested in getting away from the festive madness, let me know, and we'll book a biggy.

Eddie.

Xmas Pud Walk

A couple of years had elapsed since my last couple of walk outings with the club. The memories of the multi map episode with Eddie were starting to fade in my mind, as was the winter epic Julie and I found ourselves on, battling with near hypothermia. Surely it was safe to venture out once more. After all, what could go wrong? Oh ye of little faith.... besides, the experienced JT was leading this walk, there were no moors, or canals, or blizzards anticipated.

All appeared well as we started to gather at the Black Horse as pre-arranged. However, while we were deciding which cars to travel in, and were sorting out the parking for the others, John announced that he was off. Off to park his car we presumed, as we waited.... and waited..... and waited a bit more..... Little did we know, he'd gone, set off, departed!! We came to this conclusion after a 10 minute wait and a bit of searching around the car parks and streets, well we've all been on these sort of walks before haven't we! Luckily, Brian knew the name of the pub we were due to start from but not where it was! I wasn't sure but thought I'd heard John mention Tutbury, so decision time. With little else to go on, we headed for Tutbury to ask a Policeman when we got there at 9.00am in the morning! Eventually, after a short stop off in Desford for someone to collect their boots (oops! TAT time?), we arrived intact at the right pub, which I might add was not in Tutbury!! At last, let the walk begin towards Tutbury.....

Ackie.

..... On the Wednesday after Christmas ten members left Hinckley in disarray after a slight communication problem! Despite this ominous start, all arrived at the rendezvous point (eventually!), Lisa and Tim's new pub The Cock Inn, at Hanbury, which proved to be an excellent base for a walk. The ex Black Horse landlord and landlady had a leaflet on Hanbury Walks, so we had a mixture of "Red" walk "Fauld Crater" and "Green" walk, "Tutbury". After crossing a couple of fields from the pub, we entered a wood with signs on the opposite fence warning passers-by to "KEEP OUT, UNEXPLODED BOMBS". This was Fauld Crater, a huge hole 3/4 of a mile long and 300 feet deep. In 1942 the ammunition dump there blew up, killing 77 service personnel and civilians which is documented on a nearby memorial listing the names of those killed together with a brief account of the accident.

Pressing on, we rejoined the track east through the wood. This then opened out to give splendid views over the Staffordshire Moorlands, Peak Park and down in the valley meanders the river Dove.

Descending, we passed the old RAF camp and crossed fields running parallel to the river Dove heading for Tutbury Castle. Arriving outside the castle gates we were disappointed to find the castle closed for the winter. So we sat in the churchyard and partook of coffee and leftover Christmas fare, with nips of malt whisky.

Leaving Tutbury, we descended through pastures to Castle Hayes Park Farm, picking our way along boggy footpaths and crossed a ploughed field without getting stuck. Thankfully this was possible as the ground was still frozen. Arriving back in Hanbury village, we made a beeline for the pub where Lisa made us welcome. Ale and food were soon being downed in the warm and agreeable surroundings.

After a tour around the pub, and a read of framed newspaper cuttings of the Fauld disaster displayed on the lounge wall, we departed home.

John Trow

The Artist in the Wild

Mountains have been popular subjects with artists since the latter part of the 18th Century. Prior to that time, wild places were regarded with considerable awe. People had been too afraid of the "horrors" of the mountains to venture into them for pleasure. But by the end of the 18th Century, it was felt to be almost obligatory for any artist of worth to visit North Wales or The Lake District.

Many were inspired by the Reverend William Gilpin, a writer and illustrator. He admired nature and after one sketching trip said:

"Nature is full of fire, wildness and imagination.

Her plans are too immense for our combined optics."

Myself, I developed a love of hills and mountains long before art came into my life. But, when I retired from professional life, I rekindled my interest in art into which I had not ventured since my 'A' level days in the 1960's.

So, I soon realised that there was no better way to combine two of the great interests in my life than in art. I soon began drawing and painting, both from old photographs I had taken on mountain trips and from mountaineering books. I then discovered that David Bellamy (not the bearded botanist of TV fame, but a Welsh landscape artist) had a love of wild places and painting, which very much reflected my own interests.

His evocative paintings were a marvellous source of inspiration to me, propelling me to greater heights of interest in the art of wild places, and helping me in the development of my skills as an artist. Indeed, David's love of the great outdoors is very clearly reflected in his beautiful paintings that always capture the mood of the landscape.

Nowadays, I never venture out into the wilds without at least taking my sketchbook and one or two pencils in my pack. I also carry a camera to record those scenes of interest and inspiration encountered during the day.

Scotland particularly inspired me last year. My week at Onich with the club was a rush of inspiration. My artistic senses were very much overwhelmed by the varying scenery with its ever-changing light, colour and moods. The whole week's experience was for me, as an artist, absolutely incredible. My sketchbooks and camera were filled with scenes to paint. Even now, many months later, I still haven't managed to complete all of the scenes accumulated during that week into a painting format. Later in the year, the Lake District and Peak District added to my portfolio of work to be drawn and painted.

My art has proved to be incredibly relaxing. Sitting at the top of the Copper Mines Valley on a rock, sketching the scene in front of me on a warm, bright sunny day took away anxieties that had plagued me that morning. Painting and sketching can be all absorbing. Once at work on a project you can easily become so absorbed that all sense of time passing can be lost. But the sense of achievement on completion can be truly inspirational and therapeutic.

I am nowadays very much dedicated to my new found love of painting. I also find that I enjoy the mountains even more now. When out walking, or sitting for refreshments, I often find myself looking at a scene and saying to myself "That rock would look nice painted in Payne's Grey and Raw Umber. What a beautiful combination of Yellow Ochre and Terre Verte (Earth green) on that hillside".

I hope that those who saw my one main picture exhibition, at the club on the 14th December, enjoyed the work I was able to present. I must also thank all those who made inspiring and truly pleasing comments about my work. But, on a more mundane subject, most of my work is for sale. If you're interested I would be delighted to discuss which work you are interested in, and come to an agreement about it. I am also open to taking commissions. If you have a suitable, favourite photograph that you would like making into a watercolour or pastel painting, I'd be very happy to discuss it with you.

I hope in the coming weeks, months and years to be inspired to further progress in my painting by those wild places we visit in Britain. Indeed, I think I can summarise this love and inspiration of the hills and mountains by quoting the words of the artist, David Bellamy. In his book, "Wild Places of Britain", he says:

"Like old friends, they are always there, and always
a joy to return to, for the true mountain lover can
never tire of them".

David Pybus.

Danger - Weak Bridge - Proceed Slowly - One Person at a Time

So read the sign and heed its warning, verified by the missing planks at one end. However, there were four of us carrying 1 cwt of gas cylinder between us. The problem was solved by allowing the two largest (what logic was this?) to drag the cylinder across at speed! It worked and therefore I survive to write this account of the weekend of the 24th/25th November, when five of us went up to North Wales to clear our hut furniture from John Marston's hut in the Gwynedd valley, and return it to Hinckley.

Four of us decided to kill two birds with one stone by staying at the hostel to check it out and finalise details of the 2001 President's meet which is to be held there.

The Youth Hostel looks like an excellent venue, and the wardens (Dave and Kath Wood) were very welcoming, and extremely helpful. See back page for details of this year's President's Meet...

The hut clearing was carried out in foul weather of heavy rain and wind, deep puddles and mud. The highlight was Ackie's single-handed carry of the kitchen table across the field, over the bridge, and up the hill to the road. Particularly impressive was his bow-legged rush over the bridge to force the up-turned legs of the table (carried sherpa-style on his back) through the branches of the overhanging tree. Whatever the reverse of a TAT is, Ackie earned it on Saturday morning!

All is now safely stored in the Hinckley area. The team were also forced to sample the range of ales available in the Cwellyn Arms. This is the nearest pub to the hostel. They are excellent.

The only good thing about the foul weather was that at least we weren't missing out on anything else.

Dave Gair.

Long Mountain Walk

On 28th January, John Trow, Colin Green and Nick Barr spent the day in Shropshire on the Powys border. Having parked at Lowfield Inn, Marton we set off for Beacon Ring, the highest point of Long Mountain at 408 metres. Contouring round Beech Dingle, we encountered a nasty landslip at Fir House Farm. Colin just stopped short of steeping into slurry and mud of an unknown depth! With the farmer's help we skirted this, and made our way to Beacon Ring, on the Offas Dyke. We picked this up and followed it, heading south through Leighton Park Woods to the village of Forden/Kingswood where a pint was enjoyed at the Cock Hotel.

We then encountered some tricky pathfinding across farmland where the farmer had kindly removed stiles and waymarks. We continued through a wood and across more obstacles, returning to base at Marton just as it was getting dark. We'd had a good walk of about 12 miles in some interesting, and at times challenging, countryside!

John Trow.

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Rhydd Ddu Meet - Jan 2001

Being so close to New Year, there was only one way this meet could go: Stage 1 - a brief foray onto the soggy hills on Saturday, followed quickly by Stage 2 - alcoholic excess, rounded off by Stage 3 - a delicate visit to a tea shop on Sunday.

Despite a dubious forecast (what's new), many club members arrived at the hut to make the pilgrimage to the local hostelry. Plans were hatched for the following day, including a mass traverse of the Nantle ridge and return via Beddgelert forest, an attempt on Snowdon and an ascent of Yr Aran (not all by the same group I must stress). Most groups returned with tales of success and snowball fights, but no sign of Eddie, Carolyn and Swampy. Dave Pybus was able to shed some light, they were rumoured to be safely off the hill seeking shelter and comfort in the form of a pub, a pint and a pizza! Majority of the thoughtful gang hurriedly set off to the local, just to check that their fellow mountaineers/ drinkers* were OK. *Delete as applicable

Stage 2 of the plan was off to a storming start.

Thanks to Lee's forward thinking and a now infamous pair of "walkie-talkies", basecamp was able to maintain contact with the away team. News came in loud and clear - there had been a positive sighting of Eddie, Carolyn and Swampy. Lee reported that despite a tough challenge, the three had reached their peak and were now heading back down, rapidly!

Basecamp retired, safe in the knowledge that all was well that was until the very well stoked fire almost set the chimney alight! Stick to storage heaters Swampy! Next morning, the fire was still going strong as were some of the night-before's drinkers. Good effort!

Grim weather and bad heads were sufficiently good enough excuses for Stage 3 - a breakfast run to Pete's Eats and an early trip home. The only ones to brave the day were Nick and Dan, off for a scramble on Mynydd Mawr, whilst John and Nick were off for a walk on the way home.

Alison/Nick.

On Sunday, Dan and I decided to go scrambling. Ali nearly came too, but was 'forced' to drive people to the tea shop. Luckily we'd already pinched her guidebook, so she was expendable anyway.

So off we went to do Sentries Ridge, which goes up the side of Craig-y-Bera to ascend Mynydd Mawr. It's a grade II/III scramble, characterised by exposure and loose rock. It was also damp and slightly slippery in places. Excellent hangover cure. "Concentrates the mind", as Dan said.

The first bit was easy, up heather and rock to get to the ridge proper, which we followed for most of the way, but had to traverse off to the side for a couple of the pinnacles, which were too exposed and slippery. It was a feature of this route that a fair bit of it could be escaped from if necessary. In dry conditions though, not much of it would be problematic. Interest continues all the way to the top, with little cols breaking the ridge up into neat sections, allowing breaks to sort yourself out, or in my case, get some feeling back into my hands.

The ridge tops out onto the grassy shoulder of Mynydd Mawr, and it was a short walk to the top, in the clag, of course. Celebratory sausage rolls all round, then a stroll back down the eastern spur. Grand Day Out. Nick P.

Nant Gwynant - Pete's Place (Feb 2001)

17 old(ish), new(ish) and potential members gathered for the weekend at Pete Marston's hut. Those braving the slippery crossing over the stone bridge to the hut, appeared to arrive less mud clad than those choosing the longer cross-field approach. After a lively Friday evening the group's plans took

shape on Saturday morning. Despite low cloud and the threat of more rain, two groups headed off with two objectives.

John Trow, Nick Barr, Brian Gillett and Don Ward made for the summit of Moel Siabod whilst Alison, Ian, Lee, Helen, Kev, Annette, Richard, Dawn and Debbie had Cnicht's top in their sights. The Cnicht team reached the summit, with the aid of Dawn's navigation, in mist which had held off until the final rise to the summit. To celebrate the achievement there was a rendition of "I'm on the top of the world looking down on creation....", much to the confusion and bemusement of fellow walkers in the mist. The Siabod summiteers were less lucky with the weather, being subjected to heavy downpours, which made the interesting scramble sections rather a little too interesting at times! President Brian took the opportunity to demonstrate his nimble footwork and artistic prowess but unfortunately broke his watchstrap in the process! 5 point 9 Brian!!

The family Edward's decided on a low-level walk to Beddgelert, but their return walk was unfairly cut short by Mr Marston who *insisted* on giving them a lift back to base! It would've been rude to turn down the offer.....

A mass assault on the Tan Ronnen Inn for tea was followed by an early retreat back to the hut in hot pursuit, and high hopes of securing one of the few comfortable seats. Once all were safely gathered in, the bevies flowed and the rain fell. Mist, falling rain and snow topped hills greeted us on Sunday morning. After a rapid reassessment of plans, a visit to Pete's Eats was a popular choice. Members from Banbury MC were also enjoying a Pete's breakfast, so we compared notes on Saturday's antics with Cheryl and her mates. The gearshop traverse followed the teashop trail, and parties started to drift off and return home. Another fun weekend away....

Alison.

And Finally

Get your place secured for the President's Meet. Rumour has it there's going to be a fancy dress 70's theme this year. (Just a legitimate excuse for Eddie to wear his tank top in public). So dust off your flares, polish up those platforms –it's going to be a great weekend.